

ESSAYS
ON THE *4371. el. 31*
NECESSITY *1-7*
OF A
REDEEMER.

BY THE *K*
Rev. JOSEPH WHITELEY, A. B.
OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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REDEEMER.



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An ESSAY, &c.

IT is a melancholy reflection, that instances of the invincible force of prejudice are not wanting in this enlightened age, even in men who profess truth to be their object, and reason their guide. The idea of a revelation from God is become as offensive to the enemies of religion as the notion of his existence was to their predecessors. The existence of the Deity has been evinced by the most forcible arguments; and it is owing, not to the want of means of conviction, but to the perverseness and obstinacy of the mind when under the influence of prejudice, that the decay of atheism has been succeeded by the propagation of infidelity. It is however a fact that the whole scheme of christianity has been ridiculed, and that each of its

peculiar doctrines has been marked with disapprobation and censure. If then we are interested in the cause of God, it highly concerns us to vindicate the truth and excellency of the revelation he has been pleased to communicate to us, and especially to maintain the *Necessity* of that part of it which we consider as the foundation of our hopes, the salvation of the world by the appointment of a *Redeemer*.

The necessity of our redemption implies that we are become obnoxious to the divine punishment, in consequence of having violated the divine laws. As it seems difficult to trace the origin of moral evil, it is no wonder that a variety of hypotheses have been invented to account for its introduction. Some have deduced it from the nature of liberty, the perfect freedom of choosing good or evil : Others have denied all liberty of choice in matters of morality and religion, and have maintained that human actions are determined

mined by a chain of unalterable and necessary causes. But, without deciding on the merits of these controversies, our business is to ascertain the fact.

Is there then any moral disorder? The most superficial observer cannot but be sensible that it abounds in the world; and the slightest review of his own conduct must convince the most upright that he has in some degree increased the general corruption. Since this is the state of the world, and since we are endued with capacities of misery as well as of happiness, it is of importance to enquire how the present disorders are likely to terminate. If real danger is to be apprehended, the advantages of discovering the means of escaping that danger will surely overbalance the labour of their investigation.

The scripture-account of the formation, fall, and recovery of man is plain and easy: But this account cannot be
proposed

proposed to the infidel without exciting his disgust. He demands an enquiry from the principles of reason.— This is all that christianity requires. Let him be impartial and unbiaſſed in his deciſions : Let the pretenſions of infidelity and revelation, with reſpect to the important doctrine of the Neceſſity of a Redeemer, ſubmit to the ſame ſtrictneſs of examination : and let the ſincere and diſpaſſionate enquirer after truth decide which of them is moſt reaſonable.

Admitting the moral as well as phyſical attributes of the Deity, it is demonſtrable that mankind were originally in a ſtate of innocence and perfection much ſuperior to the preſent. Since infinite *goodneſs* muſt neceſſarily be aſcribed to the author of the univerſe as well as infinite wiſdom and power, it is neceſſary that the creatures of his hands ſhould be perfect in their kind ; fitted to the circumſtances they were placed in ; and
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endued with capacities of enjoyment and powers of action fully adequate to the purposes of their creation. The particular nature of the human constitution may, in some degree, be traced out from its present state of degradation. The perversion of any one passion or faculty is generally succeeded by inconvenience and disorder; and since almost every calamity we experience may have been the effect of such perversion, and since these calamities are not necessary but accidental; it is reasonable to conclude that our nature was originally free from the motives to such perversion, and unblemished with its present frailties and imperfections.

Reflections of this kind would easily ascertain the original constitution of man, and sufficiently determine that all his faculties were perfect in their kind; his understanding clear and comprehensive, fitted to discern the various relations he had to sustain;
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his will unbiaſſed in its choice, or rather coincident with the will of his maker ; that there was an exact temperature and balance of the appetites and paſſions, each ſuited to its particular object, but ſubject to the reſtraints of reaſon and conſcience, which alone could determine the time, the degree, the fitness of gratification. From the relation in which he ſtood to his Creator and fellow-creatures, he muſt neceſſarily have diſcovered certain laws to which he ſhould make his moral actions conformable ; which laws would be ſuitable to the holineſs of the Deity, founded in the eſſential difference of good and evil, and deſigned to preſerve and enforce the continual exerciſe of piety, benevolence and ſelf-government, in order to remove the danger ariſing from particular propenſions.

The poſſibility of deviating from right appears from the very notion of liberty, and the danger of it is evident
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from the nature of particular affections. The natural objects of propension are continually presenting themselves, and when present are naturally desirable. The frequent occasions of exciting these propensions must have a considerable tendency to incline persons to venture upon the means of gratification. When these means are allowable by the moral principle, all is well ; but when the offered pleasure appears exquisite, and the calls of duty to abstain are not extraordinary, the pleasure may in some circumstances be conceived to prevail. The slightest voluntary deviation from right might unsettle the adjustments of the inward constitution, and render a repetition of the irregularity less difficult ; that repetition might make way for another ; and thus order, innocence and happiness might be succeeded by confusion, guilt and misery.

Mankind then were originally in a state of finite perfection ; and it is an

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incontestible fact that they are at present in a state of degradation. Their original happiness was liable to be forfeited, and it has in fact been forfeited. And if it be suitable to the wisdom of God to convince mankind that his abhorrence of sin is real, and that his laws were enacted for the purpose of manifesting his absolute and essential holiness, it is reasonable to conclude that the observance of them would be enforced by penal sanctions; and of consequence there is ground for serious apprehension that the punishment annexed to their violation will in fact be inflicted.

Admitting the probability that the moral government of God which is visibly established in the present world, will be brought to perfection in a future state, it is at least probable, even from reason, that the Deity has appointed misery in that state to be the consequence of our present misconduct. But the advocates of infidelity have invented

vented two methods of averting the divine displeasure, without the necessity of having recourse to a Redeemer : It is our business then to examine how far these methods are consistent with the holiness of God, the wisdom of his government, and the eternal reason and indispensable obligation of his laws.

They contend, that the Deity, by virtue of his sovereign dominion, has a right to suspend the execution of his own laws. It is answered, that the supreme legislature has an undoubted right of superseding the execution of the laws he has enacted ; and had their establishment been arbitrary, had there been no necessity of them from the nature and constitution of things, there might have been some presumption that his mercy would incline him not to punish their violation. But it would be derogatory from his wisdom and justice to suppose him indifferent with respect to the observation of laws

not arbitrarily enacted ; and the constitution of the world, and the nature and perfections of the Deity sufficiently demonstrate that his injunctions are *not* arbitrary, but founded on the eternal and essential difference of good and evil.

From the daily instances of the goodness of the supreme Being, some have been induced to believe all his perfections to be included in that of simple absolute benevolence ; and it is suitable to their conceptions of him to contemplate him under that amiable character, rather than as the righteous governor of the world. But the disorders of the natural world, consequent upon any unreasonable indulgence, are sufficient indications of his justice. No expectations from the mercy of God can reasonably be entertained which are not perfectly consistent with his other attributes ; and it is evidently inconsistent, both with his justice and holiness, to supersede the necessity of virtue, by removing the obligation to
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it, through an arbitrary remission of sins ; without which obligation, there could be no barrier against the introduction of all manner of licentiousness.

As this plea of an arbitrary remission is repugnant to the attributes of the Deity, and subversive of the design of his laws ; it remains to consider whether repentance alone is a sufficient atonement for the guilt of past offences ; which is the other plea which the enemies of our most holy religion have invented, in order to supersede the necessity of a Redeemer.

Admitting the constitution of the world and the general course of providence to be of divine appointment, there will not appear the slightest presumption that repentance can expiate guilt. Rashness and imprudence are, in fact, generally followed by inconvenience and disgrace ; poverty, infamy, disease, untimely death, are the natural consequences of inveterate habits

habits of intemperance, extravagance and folly ; and although these consequences are sometimes deferred, yet they frequently rush in suddenly upon the offender with irresistible violence, and can neither be repelled nor weakened by the most sincere and heartfelt repentance. The consideration then of the natural constitution of the world would rather confirm than remove the apprehension, that vice, however repented of and forsaken, will finally be punished according to the righteous judgment of God.

In civil societies, the clearest evidences of repentance are disregarded ; at least the criminal derives from them no claim of exemption from the punishment denounced against the violation of the established laws. The remission of the incurred penalty upon repentance would subvert the design of enacting laws, and defeat the end of society. And if the moral government of God also be instituted for
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certain ends, for the display of his holiness and justice ; reason and analogy lead us to conclude, that these ends would rather be defeated than accomplished by such a method of pardon.

Indeed repentance cannot be said to expiate at all, unless it be shewn to be a condition which may reasonably be offered to satisfy the justice of an offended God. But we cannot from reason alone discover what conditions his justice may demand. We can neither ascertain the degree of guilt incurred by the violation of the laws of God, nor the degree of future punishment he may have been pleased to annex to that guilt, nor all the reasons which render the infliction of it necessary : Therefore neither repentance alone, nor an arbitrary remission, nor any other condition which reason proposes, can be urged as the adequate means of averting the divine punishment.

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But although we are unable, without Revelation, to determine upon what conditions the penalty may be remitted ; yet there is something in the constitution of the world which displays the compassion and indulgence, as well as the severity of its author : Something that might inspire the hope of a remedy against the fatal consequences of moral evil, although reason alone could neither discover the nature of such remedy, nor the manner of its operation. The natural consequences of irregularity are sometimes removed by the application of proper remedies, and by the interposition of others ; without which remedies and which interposition, the unhappy effects of misconduct must have been misery or destruction, according to the fixed general laws of the constitution of nature.

The analogy of nature then might suggest a hope that the mercy of God may have made some provision for preventing

preventing the misery annexed to sin from taking place. But as we can neither discover, without Revelation, all the reasons why future punishment is annexed to moral evil, nor how this punishment will be inflicted, so we cannot discover by what means it may be prevented. It belongs to God alone to determine upon what conditions he will be reconciled to a guilty world; and therefore, the terms of reconciliation are properly subjects for divine Revelation.

It has pleased God of his infinite mercy to supply the defects of reason in a matter which so nearly concerns us. He has been pleased to communicate a Revelation to his guilty creatures, which clearly informs us of the introduction of moral evil, and of the provision which has been made in order to prevent its fatal consequences. It exhibits to the world a view of the necessity, as well as of the plan of redemption: And although reason could

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never have discovered how a Redeemer could expiate the guilt of human transgression, yet when such expiation is asserted in a well-attested revelation, it would be madness to reject it ; especially as the infidel cannot prove it repugnant to reason, and the christian can evince that it is perfectly reconcileable to the divine attributes, and confirmed by the analogy of the natural constitution of the world.

We are taught by this revelation that our first parents were created in a state of finite perfection ; that their creator had given them laws suitable to their nature, and to the relations they had to sustain ; the observance of which laws was enforced by the severest penal sanctions in order to preserve a just sense of God's hatred of sin, and of the absolute holiness of his nature ; that these laws were violated, and that an earnest of the divine punishment was actually given by the forfeiture of happiness and immortality ; that the hu-
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man heart became the seat of inordinate affections and desires ; and that the means of gratifying these desires were pursued, without regard to the all-seeing eye of God, or the indispensable obligation of his laws.

And since the execution of these laws is as necessary as their establishment ; necessary to manifest the evil of sin and the purity of God ; it is clear that without the interposition of the divine mercy, in a way suitable to the holiness of his nature, to the wisdom, the ends, the reasons, of his government, and the inviolable authority of his laws, mankind must have lived under a dreadful expectation of the righteous judgment of God.

Some provision then is necessary for preventing the natural or appointed consequences of sin from actually following : And since revelation informs us that God has appointed the salvation of the world to be effected by a

Redeemer, that appointment renders a Redeemer necessary. How his interposition can be of sufficient efficacy to prevent the execution of the divine justice, and to procure the means of obtaining the final happiness of our nature, cannot perhaps in our present state of ignorance be determined. It is sufficient to be informed that, without such interposition, we must have been finally and eternally miserable in a future state of existence; that a Redeemer is necessary since the consequences of sin would otherwise have been inevitable; and that God has been graciously pleased to appoint one in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. And it rather becomes us to adore the mercy of God in thus putting us into a capacity of salvation, than presumptuously to dispute the justice and wisdom of the appointment of a Mediator.

Yet there have not been wanting men who have rejected the doctrine of our Redemption by Jesus Christ, because

cause they think it inconsistent with the divine attributes to punish the innocent for the guilty. It is acknowledged that an arbitrary infliction of punishment upon an innocent person, contrary to his will, would be unjust. But this is not the case. The author of our salvation *voluntarily* offered himself a victim for our sins ; he *voluntarily* suffered in our stead ; and in consequence of his unequalled condescension in this interposition, he received a glorious reward in that nature which he had assumed for the accomplishment of our redemption.

The objection then against the appointment of a Redeemer, as being arbitrary and tyrannical, is obviated by a fair representation of the case ; but it will be more fully obviated, by considering that instances even of the *Necessity* of vicarious punishment occur in the daily course of providence. The natural consequences of irregularity would sometimes be misery, and even destruction,

destruction, without the interposition of others ; and whenever such interposition can prevent that destruction, or alleviate that misery, it is suitable to the nature God has given us, and therefore our duty, to interpose, although our assistance may be attended with a considerable degree of pain. The whole of our infancy and youth shews that our happiness in mature life is connected with this painful attention, and the calls of nature and humanity on all occasions induce the parent, the guardian, the friend, to fulfil the office of the kind Mediator.

Since this is matter of experience, such objections must arise either from a want of attention to the general laws of nature, or from not considering these laws as the appointments of God. A due consideration of facts would easily convince us of our extreme ignorance, and manifest the absurdity of objecting against vicarious punishments, merely because we cannot comprehend how
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such punishments are fit, efficacious, or necessary.

Upon the whole it appears from experience and from revelation that the world is in a state of disorder and ruin, and that nothing we can do can reasonably be relied on as adequate to avert the punishment denounced against our sins; much less to accomplish the final happiness of our nature; of consequence *some* provision is necessary from the mercy of God, to effect our salvation. This appears to have been the sense of mankind from the general prevalence of propitiatory sacrifices, even amongst the heathens. The notion of the efficacy of these sacrifices might have been traditionally derived from the more enlightened world, amongst whom they were instituted as types of the great sacrifice which was to atone for the sins of the world. Since then revelation teaches us that God has been pleased to appoint our salvation to be effected by a *Redeemer*, that appointment

ment readers his interposition necessary, and our sincere endeavours to perform the conditions he has been pleased to require would be more suitable to our present circumstances, than unwarrantable researches after the necessity and fitness of these conditions.



T H E E N D .

